

Appl. No. 09/976,310

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

In the Office Action, claims 45, 46 and 49 to 51 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by Opalka et al (United States Patent 6,259,699).

Independent claim 45 has been amended to incorporate all of the features of dependent claim 47 and intervening claim 46. Independent claim 49 has been amended to incorporate all of the features of dependent claim 52. Claims 46, 47, and 52 have therefore been cancelled.

As acknowledged on page 3 of the Office Action, claims 47 and 52 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim, specifically claims 45 and 49 respectively, and any intervening claims. Amended independent claims 45 and 49 correspond to independent forms of claims 47 and 52, respectively, and therefore are believed to be allowable. Claims 48, 50, and 51 now depend from the amended and allowable independent claims 45 and 49, and are also allowable.

Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections under 35 U.S.C. 102(c) are therefore respectfully requested. It should be noted, however, that the amendments reflected in the preceding listing of claims have been made solely to advance the examination of the present application. Applicant in no way concedes that the former claims were unpatentable over Opalka et al.

Allowed claims 5 and 11 have been maintained without amendment in the preceding listing of claims, although claim 5 has been amended to correct a typographical error.

All of the claims remaining in the application include subject matter that either has been allowed or has been indicated in the Office Action to be allowable. It is therefore believed that

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the application is now in condition for allowance, and early action to this effect is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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